

Natural Area Preservation News

Protecting and restoring Ann Arbor's natural areas and fostering an environmental ethic among its citizens

Volume 17, Number 2

Summer 2012

Leslie Park Golf Course and Nature Areas

by NAP staff

Golfing is a widely-enjoyed recreational activity, yet land management practices behind the scenes can often be criticized as resource-intensive and ecologically insensitive. In Ann Arbor, however, the management at the publicly owned Leslie Park Golf Course (LPGC) has strived to be sensitive to the environmental challenges related to golf course management, starting with consistently taking steps to reduce the use of fertilizers to improve water quality along Traver Creek.

In the last two years LPGC has made a distinctive name for itself in the golf and environmental communities by becoming nationally recognized for course quality by Golf Digest and internationally recognized for its bird habitat value. NAP has cultivated a relationship with course staff to further improve the management of the out-of-play areas in hopes of transforming them to interconnected high-quality habitats to be utilized by wildlife.

The land that the golf course occupies was long ago dominated by oak-hickory woodlands within a matrix of wet meadows buffering Traver Creek and its tributaries. In the 1920s Eugene and Emily Leslie moved to Ann Arbor and established a homestead, laboratory, and orchard in the area that is now LPGC,

Leslie Science and Nature Center, and Black Pond Woods. Much of the landscape was transformed into orchards for apples, peaches, and cherries, range lands for Hereford cattle, and fragmented woods. The land rotated through these different land uses for over 50

years until the Leslie family sold and bequeathed the land to the City of Ann Arbor. The LPGC was developed in the areas surrounding Traver Creek that were once orchard and grazing lands. Surrounding much of the course are the remnant woodlands left mostly undisturbed and today managed by NAP.

As you walk through the surrounding woodlands, like Black Pond Woods, Stapp Nature Area, and Leslie Woods, you quickly realize that the golf course has amazing potential for connecting these woodland habitats through existing or potential corridors in the course. These corridors can provide transitional habitat and allow for the exchange of genetic information between currently isolated populations of amphibians and butterflies. The main challenge to the ecological potential of this area is that the core remaining oak-hickory woodlands and wet meadows are currently separated from each other by low diversity shrublands and old fields, lawns, roads and urban structures.

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Coordinator's Corner

The Well-Rounded Naturalist

I've always been a generalist. In college, I joked that I was an “-ology” major because my course list was filled with such subjects as ecology, biology, zoology, entomology, ornithology, mammalogy, geology, dendrology, geomorphology, and so on. I learned a little bit about a lot of different subjects. In doing so, it quickly became clear that there was plenty of carry-over from one course to the other. In fact, having a broader knowledge base really helped me in all of my courses. For example, knowing something about glacial history and landforms made me a better botanist because I recognized the various soils that supported different plant communities. And knowing plants made it easier to track down the various butterflies that depended on those species. It is a lot easier to find a Spicebush Swallowtail if you know what a spicebush looks like and where to find that shrub. The connections between soils and plants and insects and other wildlife became so real and so apparent to me. It really opened my eyes to the interconnectedness of nature, and made me a better, well-rounded naturalist.

How about you? Do you think of yourself as a “plant person” or a “bird person?” And more to the point, is your involvement with NAP solely focused on removing invasive plants? Or are you *only* a burn volunteer, or *only* a photo-monitor, or *only* a bird surveyor? If so, then I'd encourage you – no, I'd challenge you – to stretch yourself and expand into some different parts of what NAP has to offer.

So, maybe you know where to go in the parks to see beautiful spring wildflowers, but do you know where to go to see beautiful birds, or hear deafening frog choruses? And could you identify those species of wildlife if you saw/heard them? Maybe you know how to pull garlic mustard, but do you know how to create native wildflower gardens? And maybe you know how to build a bluebird house, but do you know how to help nesting habitat for turtles? If not, NAP can help you. As you read through this newsletter, you'll see opportunities to learn about and do all of these things. And the more you learn about the other parts of nature's web of life in our parks, the better you'll understand the complexity of what you already *thought* you knew about your favorite nature areas.

~ David Borneman



Don't Forget!

NAP's new Gold Star Collector Buttons Series is a great way to show-off your volunteer spirit! Collect three different 2012 buttons at different types of events to qualify for a fun prize. Collect six unique ones for an even greater prize. Prizes will be distributed at our annual Volunteer Appreciation Potluck on October 24, 2012. Show-up wearing your buttons! Show-off your volunteer spirit by wearing them throughout the year!



A unit of the City of Ann Arbor
Public Services, Field Operations

*The mission of Natural Area
Preservation is to protect and restore
Ann Arbor's natural areas and to foster
an environmental ethic among its citizens.*

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Protecting and Restoring Via Opinions and Advice

By Lara Treemore Spears



NAP's mission includes protecting and restoring Ann Arbor's natural areas. We often report on restoration work volunteers are doing in the "wilds" of our Ann Arbor parks, but there are other less-visible actions we take on a daily basis that

also support our mission. NAP is one of several City offices that reviews and comments on construction and maintenance projects that may affect natural features such as wetlands, streams, and trees. Here are some examples of our behind-the-scenes work to protect the ecological health and function of nature within our City's boundaries.

NAP assists by:

- providing input on how to minimize environmental impacts during underground utility repairs and how to restore the above-ground disturbed areas afterwards;
- evaluating the effects of planting various types of vegetation, and encourages the use of local genotype native plant species;
- reviewing grading plans for the possible effects of reshaping the earth, and seeking opportunities to avoid impacts to tree root zones (the area within the "drip line" of trees, defined as the ground surface that would get wet when rain drops fall from the branches of the trees);
- identifying tree species of particular interest, such as hackberry (an important food plant for several native butterfly species, including the locally uncommon Tawny Emperor), so that impacts on them can be avoided if possible;
- identifying areas as "high-quality native forest fragments," based on definitions in the City Land Development Regulations, which afford these woodlands special protection;
- attempting to identify "win-win" solutions when we comment on a project, so that habitat values and ecological functions can be protected, designed and maintained in a sustainable way in the built environment.

Projects on which we have provided input in the past few years have included the wetland plantings at West Park and Wheeler Service Center, stormwater utility repairs at Redbud, Ruthven and Cedar Bend Nature Areas, sanitary utility repairs at Bluffs and Bird Hills Nature Areas, and streambank stabilization in Huron Parkway Nature Area. So, if you see bulldozers or utility repair crews in or near nature areas, NAP has probably been involved in recommending the placement of temporary protection fencing and the native seed mix that is used for restoration, among other things.

Take Time for Turtles

by Christine Chessler

Perhaps you have enjoyed the sight of a Painted Turtle basking at Gallup Park. Turtles can be found using wetlands, rivers and streams, lakes, ponds, and woods throughout Ann Arbor. Unfortunately, turtle hatchlings have a high mortality rate due in large part to artificially high predation and less-than-optimal nesting choices. This past summer, a nesting female was observed laying eggs directly in the sand of the volleyball court at Scheffler Park!

To continue our herpetological conservation efforts, NAP created a program this year focused on local turtle stewardship. We hope that this volunteer project will increase citizen engagement, knowledge about locations of turtles within the City, and nesting opportunities for female turtles.

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*A painted turtle found by a NAP volunteer.
Photo by George Hammond*

Volunteer Stewardship Calendar

Summer 2012

June

June 2, Saturday

Bird Walk

Wheeler Service Center

7:30 am to 9:30 am

Free and fun for all ages. Join City Ornithologist Dea Armstrong as she leads a walk to look for early summer birds. Bring binoculars if you have them and come prepared to walk in fields with tall grasses. Meet in the small parking lot on the right off the main entrance to the Material Recovery Facility off of Platt Rd. just south of Ellsworth.

June 2, Saturday

National Trails Day Events

National Trails Day is a nationwide event celebrating local trails and assisting with their restoration, creation and maintenance. Bring your plastic sleds to help with the hauling of woodchips. Join us at one of the following locations:

- **Barton Nature Area**

9:00 am to 12:00 pm

We will be trimming back the overgrowth, diverting water from wet trails, and spreading woodchips to help keep the trails accessible. Meet at the Barton Dam parking lot at the corner of Huron River Dr. and Bird Rd.

- **Black Pond Woods Nature Area**

1:00 pm to 4:00 pm

We will be re-constructing an existing switchback on one of the trails, as well as trimming back the overgrowth and spreading woodchips to help keep the trails accessible. Meet us in the Leslie Science and Nature Center parking lot, 1831 Traver Rd.

June 3, Sunday

Miller Nature Area Workday

10:00 am to 1:00 pm

Join in the effort to improve Miller Nature Area by hand-pulling bittercress, dame's rocket, garlic mustard and other invasive plant species that threaten the beauty of this natural area. Meet us at the entrance at Westwood Ave. and Grace St., north of Arborview Blvd.

June 8, Friday

Mayor's Green Fair

Main Street, Downtown Ann Arbor

6:00 pm to 9:00 pm

Visit NAP's table at this annual event. Free entertainment and over 120 exhibits. This is a free, family-friendly, "drop-in" event! Food vendors will be on-site. This event will be held rain or shine. Call 734-794-6161 x41602 or visit www.a2gov.org/greenfair.

June 9, Saturday

Bird Walk

Gallup Park

7:30 am to 9:30 am

Free and fun for all ages. Join City Ornithologist Dea Armstrong. Bring binoculars if you have them. Meet at the paddleboat dock in Gallup Park near the canoe livery.

June 9, Saturday

Argo Nature Area Workday

9:00 am to 12:00 pm

Lend a hand combating bittercress, dame's rocket and other invasive plants so the native plant species have a chance to thrive. We'll also be fixing-up the trails and picking up trash. Meet in the Argo Canoe Livery parking lot near the entrance to the woods, 1055 Longshore Dr.

June 14, Thursday

AADL Series: Nature Walk

Black Pond Woods Nature Area

7:00 pm to 8:30 pm

Please join NAP and the Ann Arbor District Library on a nature walk through Black Pond Woods Nature Area. We will observe and discuss restoration efforts that have occurred over the past few years at this site. Meet in the Leslie Science and Nature Center parking lot, 1831 Traver Rd.

Please wear long pants and closed-toe shoes to all workdays. Minors must be accompanied by a guardian or contact NAP in advance to obtain a release form. Snacks, water, and tools are provided.

June 21, Thursday

United Way Day of Action

Cranbrook Park Workday

9:00 am to 12:00 pm and/or

1:00 pm to 4:00 pm

Join Ann Arbor Rotary, NAP, and Ann Arbor Adopt-A-Park to remove invasive plants, plant trees, and make the park look great! Park in the Whole Foods SIDE parking lot and enter the park off Oakbrook Dr, just south of Rolling Meadows Dr.

June 23, Saturday

Pollinator Week Workday

Barton Nature Area

9:00 am to 12:00 pm

Help keep Barton beautiful by hand-pulling spotted knapweed, bittercress and other invasive plant species that threaten the native habitats of this natural area. Meet at the Barton Dam parking lot at the corner of Huron River Dr. and Bird Rd.

Volunteer Stewardship Calendar

Summer 2012

July

July 14, Saturday

Furstenberg Native Garden Workday

9:00 am to 12:00 pm

Help us weed and preserve this native garden amidst the 38 acres of Furstenberg Nature Area, featuring some of the most diverse flora anywhere in Ann Arbor. Plus, you're certain to learn a lot about native plants, particularly prairie plants, from Park Steward and Master Gardener Aunita Erskine. Meet in the parking lot off Fuller Rd.

July 14, Saturday

Molin Nature Area Workday

1:00 pm to 4:00 pm

Enjoy a beautiful afternoon helping remove invasive plants from Molin Nature Area. Don't forget to hike all the way in to view the spectacular Bur oak. Meet at the end of Powell Rd. on Columbia.

July 15, Sunday

Redbud Nature Area Workday

9:00 am to 12:00 pm

Join in the effort to remove invasive plants such as bittercress and Canada thistle. Redbud is home to a beautiful prairie. Meet at the park entrance at the intersection of Parkwood Avenue and Jeanne St.

Lisa Anderson '97

Please wear long pants and closed-toe shoes to all workdays. Minors must be accompanied by a guardian or contact NAP in advance to obtain a release form. Snacks, water, and tools are provided.

July 15, Sunday

Huron River Day

Gallup Park

12:00 pm to 4:00 pm

Enjoy the beautiful Huron River and participate in FREE family activities during the Huron River Day celebration at Gallup Park. This event will be full of fun activities for children, river exhibits, live music, animals, a guided canoe trip, fishing, and much more! Food will be available for purchase. All ages welcome! Ride your bike to the event, use the free valet bike parking, and receive a coupon for a free boat rental during the festival! For more information, call 734-662-9319 or go to www.a2gov.org/hrd.

August

August 11, Saturday

Traver Creek Nature Area Workday

9:00 am to 12:00 pm

Join the effort to control invasive shrubs in these woods next to the Leslie Golf Course. Meet at the Leslie Park Golf Course Maintenance Barn located at 2255 Traver Rd.

August 16, Thursday

AADL Series: Nature Walk

Furstenberg Nature Area

7:00 pm to 8:30 pm

Please join NAP on a nature walk through Furstenberg Nature Area. We will observe and discuss restoration efforts that have occurred over the past few years at this site, plus learn about native plant species present in the late summer. Meet in the parking lot off Fuller Road, across from Huron High School.

August 19, Saturday

Olson Nature Area Workday

9:00 am to 12:00 pm

Help with our efforts to control spotted knapweed, a troublesome invasive plant. Meet at the entrance on Dhu Varren Road, just east of Pontiac Trail.

Stewardship Network's Stewards' Circle

Bruegger's Bagels - 709 N. University Ave.

7:30 am to 8:30 am

Are you interested in learning more about how to care for natural areas - woods, creeks, prairies, wetlands? Then join the Stewardship Network's Huron Arbor cluster for an informal discussion on a monthly topic with volunteer and professional land stewards, plus others interested in nature. Free and open to anyone interested.

June 12, Tuesday

Introduction to Restoration:

So you want to do some restoration? What are the basics? What should a newcomer look forward to? Tips and tricks to getting started.

July 10, Tuesday

Invasive Animals:

Lions and tigers and boars, oh my! We know they're out there, but how do they effect local ecology? What can we do about them?

August 14, Tuesday

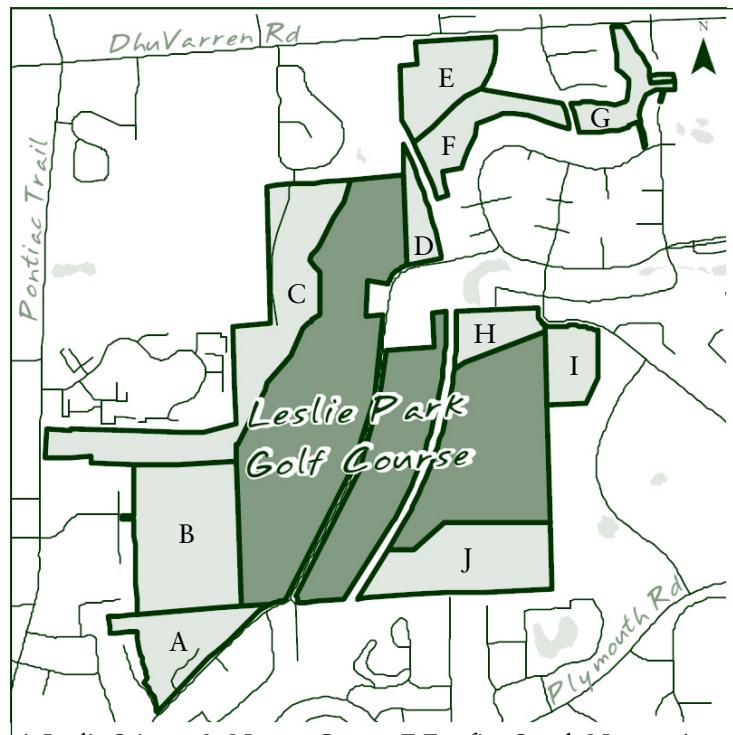
Waterway Restoration:

Land and water are inextricably linked, but many restorationists live and work on the land. What invasives do we control in the watery environment? How can we protect and restore our waterways? How do we work in an environment that crosses jurisdictional borders?

Leslie Park Golf Course

Continued from page 1

Despite these challenges, NAP and LPGC are coordinating to improve this situation because of the very high biological diversity of this area's flora and fauna. In addition to thinking about ecological restoration and management goals and objectives for the entire Traver Creek region, NAP and LPGC are embarking upon actions that help create the necessary linkages on the golf course to connect the surrounding habitats. One of our main objectives is to expand wet meadows and wetlands along and around Traver Creek and on the golf course to control erosion, improve water quality, and increase native vegetation in these areas. This is being done by dispersing native plant seed, controlling invasives, converting golf course rough and unmowed areas into prairie and wet meadows, and stabilizing eroded creek banks within the golf course. Additionally, NAP and LPGC have worked together to control invasive species in the surrounding woodlands, as well as conduct controlled burns in these areas adjacent to and on the golf course. Leslie Park Golf Course is increasing the course's utility to wildlife by installing and maintaining a native plant butterfly garden and bluebird boxes, and has reevaluated its Integrated Pest Management (IPM)



A Leslie Science & Nature Center F Foxfire South Nature Area
B Black Pond Woods Nature Area G Placid Way Nature Area
C Leslie Park H Tuebingen Park
D Traver Creek Nature Area I Stapp Nature Area
E Dhu Varren Nature Area J Leslie Woods Nature Area

strategy to further reduce its use of pesticides. All of these actions together are specifically aimed at making the golf course more hospitable to birds and other wildlife.

NAP and LPGC plan to continue to manage the area with the vision that increasing the wildlife habitat and corridors while increasing the playability of its holes, makes the course a better destination for golfers seeking a getaway close to home. NAP is increasingly thankful for and enriched by the relationship with golf course staff and is excited to create and manage a high-quality interconnected matrix of native plant communities and urban land uses together in the future.

Turtles

Continued from page 3

NAP staff and volunteers created nesting habitat this spring out of sand and mulch piles. These nesting sites are located on sunny, well-drained spots near the water and on raised embankments to give the females nesting options that will likely improve hatchling survival. Each nest also has a border and City sign to designate it as turtle habitat to curious children and park users. For this pilot year, we are focusing our efforts at Bandemer Park, Dolph Nature Area, Gallup Park, Huron Parkway Nature Area, and Scheffler Park.

Volunteers will monitor various stages of turtle nesting and hatching in addition to documenting predation of eggs. Nesting typically occurs from late May to mid-July, but this varies depending on the species and weather conditions. Incubation times also vary depending on nest temperatures and humidity, but hatchlings typically emerge in 60-90 days.

In addition to their nest-monitoring efforts, volunteers will also help document locations in the City where various species of turtle occur. This will help us gather critical data on potential areas for conservation and management as well as locations for future turtle nests. Volunteers may also help post signs, construct nest-protection boxes, and keep the habitat free of weeds.

If you are interested in becoming a "Turtle Steward," please contact NAP@a2gov.org or call the office. You can also contribute observations of turtles and other local herpetofauna to the Michigan Herp Atlas project, www.MIHerpAtlas.org

NAPpenings

Scarlett Middle School Students' Big Dig!



*A piece of an antique bottle discovered at the archaeological dig.
Photo by David Szczygiel*

Excitement is high for some sixth-graders at Scarlett Middle School who are getting a chance to be archaeologists and environmental stewards at the same time thanks to the discovery of an old farm dump deep in the Scarlett Mitchell Woods.

Under guidance from NAP and the schools, students are cleaning up the woods while they salvage artifacts for later research. The pieces of antique bottles, kitchenware, and farm equipment found so far range from 1835 to 1950. Thank you Pat Frey for taking the lead on this very unique opportunity!

Thank you...

Many thanks to the following groups who volunteered with NAP recently. We could not make such a difference without you!

Ann Arbor Preparatory High School
Ann Arbor Rowing Club
Community High School
EMU Tau Kappa Epsilon
Huron Rowing Association
New Life Church
Old Navy
Pioneer Rowing Club
Skyline Crew
Temple Beth Emeth
UM American Association of Pharmaceutical Sciences
UM Economics 108, Winter semester
UM North Campus Day of Service
UM Sigma Lambda Gamma
UM Theta Xi
UM Circle K
Valassis
YMCA Youth Volunteer Corps

Thank you...

William Cron for becoming a park steward at Zion Park!

Tidy Tom for providing bags and gloves for park clean-up events!

Downtown Home & Garden for donating coupons for our Garlic Mustard Weed-Out Day volunteers.

REI for donating coupons and water bottles for the event!

Do you eBird?

eBird collects observations from birders all over the world and makes it available to anyone via www.ebird.org

Staff Updates

Hello...



Yousef Rabhi

Having grown up in Ann Arbor next door to Leslie Woods, I developed an ethic of stewardship of the wonderful resources that our community's parkland has to offer. Since I was a youth, I have been involved with the Buhr Park Children's Wet Meadow Project, helping me to understand the power of community to make change for the better. For the last five seasons, I worked on the natural areas crew at the Matthaei Botanical Gardens and Nichols Arboretum, learning valuable technical skills for preserving our natural heritage. It is with great excitement that I will have the opportunity to use all of these experiences in my new role as workday coordinator.



Rachel Maranto

I grew up in Fort Wayne, IN and went to school at Indiana University, where I earned a B.S. in Environmental Science. After graduating, I spent two years in the greater Seattle area working as an AmeriCorps service volunteer in the environmental restoration field. I joined NAP's field crew in March of this year. I am very happy to be back home in the Midwest working for a cause I believe in!

NAP Funding

By Tina Roselle



As a Natural Area Preservation volunteer or supporter you probably know that all of our work is currently funded by the 2007-2012 Park Maintenance and Capital Improvements Millage.

This millage generates approximately \$5,000,000 annually and has funded the following over the past five years:

- 100% of NAP activities including restoration activities, biological monitoring, and outreach.
- Park maintenance activities including forestry, park equipment repairs, recreation facility maintenance, Adopt-A-Park, and the Give 365 volunteer program.
- Park capital improvements projects such as upgraded lighting at the Farmers Market, renovation of athletic fields at Fuller Park, and new playground equipment at 16 neighborhood parks.

The millage does not cover services like snow removal, trash collection, or utilities at recreation facilities.

Based on the City's median home value of \$213,000, the average homeowner contributes \$117 to this millage. NAP's annual budget is about \$700,000 which is approximately 15% of the total annual millage.

You may have also noticed that the millage will be expiring at the end of the year. The tentative timeline for public comment on the potential parks millage renewal is:

- Tuesday, July 17 - Park Advisory Commission recommendation on millage renewal ballot language
- Late July or early August - City Council resolution on millage renewal ballot language
- Tuesday, Nov. 6 - Millage renewal on November voting ballot.

For more information, please visit www.a2gov.org/parksmillage. Your millage-related comments are welcome at a2parks@a2gov.org.

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